

The Power of a Racial Equity Impact Analysis

The Context Requires It. Around any issue, different racial groups are “differently situated.” Circumstances of race, place, class, and other factors position different racial groups with different resources and different needs in relation to any social good. Racial groups share universal aspirations (e.g., college graduation, optimal health, adequate housing, personal safety), but the *means* for achieving or guaranteeing these aspirations are likely to be varied, based on how groups are situated. One size *doesn’t* fit all when it comes to successful interventions. For example, if subprime loans are disproportionately given to people of color, even when their economic circumstances are comparable to whites, wealth-building for communities of color will need, among its strategies, to address racial discrimination in subprime lending – an issue that doesn’t systematically affect white communities. Thus, Prof. John Powell talks about the approach of “*targeted universalism*” – the use of *varying* strategies to advance *universal* goal attainment. A **Racial Equity Impact Analysis** helps to identify what those strategies should be or how to alter existing policies and practices in order to achieve greater results for all groups.

The Tool is User-Friendly. The Race Matters tool to conduct a **Racial Equity Impact Analysis** (REIA) consists of five questions that can be asked regarding any policy, practice, protocol, strategy, or decision, either existing or proposed. It can be used immediately, with tasks residing on your desk. The questions are these:

Racial Equity Impact Analysis

1. Are all racial/ethnic groups who are affected by the policy/practice/decision **at the table**?
2. How will the proposed policy/practice/decision **affect** each group?
3. How will the proposed policy/practice/decision **be perceived by** each group?
4. Does the policy/practice/decision **worsen or ignore** existing disparities?
5. Based on the above responses, **what revisions** are needed in the policy/practice/decision under discussion?

Here are some ways that Race Matters Institute clients have used the tool in their work:

- Put their Strategic Plan through the REIA to see where it needed to be strengthened in order to address different racial groups effectively
- Used the tool to improve HR policies
- Determined whether investments needed to be modified in order to close racial gaps
- Helped grantees fine-tune their particular work so that it speaks more directly to different groups
- Framed a statewide conference in more inclusive ways
- Raised the questions from the tool in settings where they serve in advisory and advocacy capacities so that these settings can become more intentional about seeking racially equitable results
- Expanded their information sources as an immediate way to access the insights different groups (and different media) bring to the table.

Results Can be More Powerful. Too often we see results where across-the-board outcomes improve, but gaps remain or perhaps even widen when the results data are broken out by race. The **Racial Equity Impact Analysis** helps you *both* raise the overall bar *and* close the racial gaps that exist on any given indicator by devising or revising approaches so that they speak specifically to how different groups experience an issue. Greater intentionality to understanding how groups are differently situated, and more strategic action from that intentionality promise better results for all groups and the narrowing of gaps among them. This is what effective work toward racial equity produces.



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Considerations for Being an Active REIA Coach

- ✓ Use a Racial Equity Impact Analysis regularly in your own work
- ✓ Be an active learner about how policies and practices have contributed to racial inequities and how different policies and practices can close racial gaps
- ✓ Provide encouragement to colleagues to use a Racial Equity Impact Analysis for key decisions and issues in their work
- ✓ Help colleagues with any questions they have about using the tool, and introduce new colleagues to the tool's value for their work
- ✓ Identify places in your organization's routine processes where use of a Racial Equity Impact Analysis could be "hard-wired"
- ✓ Participate, where available, in peer exchanges and coaching calls around use of the tool
- ✓ What else?



Helping Others to Apply the Racial Equity Impact Analysis

The following chart offers typical ways that users may get stuck or detoured when using the Racial Equity Impact Analysis – and ways to help them past these places.

Question on the Tool	Typical Challenges	Helpful Responses
Are the racial/ethnic groups most affected by this (investment/policy/practice/ decision) represented at the table? Is there another “table” where they are present?	Users focus on functional roles that should be represented (e.g., parents, teachers or managers, employees) rather than affected racial/ethnic groups.	While functional roles are appropriate to consider for overall strategy, this tool asks us to focus on racial/ethnic groups within any identified functional categories. The foremost category for this tool’s focus is those <i>ultimately</i> affected, such as residents, students, workers, service recipients.
	Users stop because they don’t have a representative group at their table.	An alternative is to identify regular “tables” where the voices of different racial/ethnic groups are honored, and seek input from those places. Further, users can gain important information to apply in the use of this tool by regularly reading race-informed research and advocacy materials.
	Users may not offer sufficiently detailed racial categories (e.g., may not break labels like Latino or Native American or Black out further to reflect variations in sub-group experiences or situations) and/or may forget to include Whites in the list, if they, too are affected.	Encourage users to probe each initial category for further variation. For example, they may end up breaking out the category Latino further into Mexican American, Guatemalan, Puerto Rican, etc., and longtime residents in contrast to newcomers in those groups, or bilingual (Spanish and English) in contrast to English-learners. The point is to have sufficient specificity to appreciate that different sub-groups are “differently situated” with regard to a given issue.
For the (investment/policy/practice/ decision) being considered here (existing or new), what results are you trying to achieve?	The point of this question is to be sure everyone is on the same page for subsequent questions. For example, if the tool is being used to review a zoning question, the results desired could vary from supporting a developer’s ability to maximize profit to protecting the value of existing	

	property to advancing opportunities for home ownership across groups. Everyone needs to be on the same page here in order to have a productive conversation around the subsequent questions. Of course, the tool's emphasis is to advance racial equity on any given question, but the group needs to agree on that before proceeding.	
How will the (investment/policy/practice/ decision) affect the different racial/ethnic groups?	Users may be quick to say that the effect will be the same across groups.	Because this is rarely the case, encourage them to have a specific conversation around each of the groups identified above.
How will the (investment/policy/practice/ decision) be perceived by the different racial/ethnic groups?	Users may be inclined to say that perceptions don't matter if the (investment/policy/ practice/ decision) is well-designed.	You can point out that participation or cooperation is highly related to perceptions. An (investment/policy/practice/ decision) that is culturally aligned is more likely to be successful.
Do you think the (investment/policy/practice/ decision) worsens existing disparities faced by the different racial/ethnic groups or may produce other unintended consequences?	Users may simply state and stop by saying that it does ignore or worsen disparities.	It is essential that they talk through <i>how</i> that happens in order to advance meaningful discussion about how to prevent such an outcome. This part of the discussion contributes centrally to considerations for revision (next).
Based on your answers above, how should the (investment/ policy/practice/ decision) be revised?	At this juncture, some users may put ideas for revision on the table that are not related to the discussion in the previous steps.	Remind users that this step is intended to fine-tune the original proposal, based on the conversation that has already occurred. It is a time for <i>narrowing</i> that discussion to areas needing revision in the original idea. <i>After</i> that is achieved is the preferred time to entertain other ideas.
	Suggestions for revision may themselves need to be run through the Racial Equity Impact Analysis.	This is a helpful suggestion to make, especially if suggestions become points of debate.